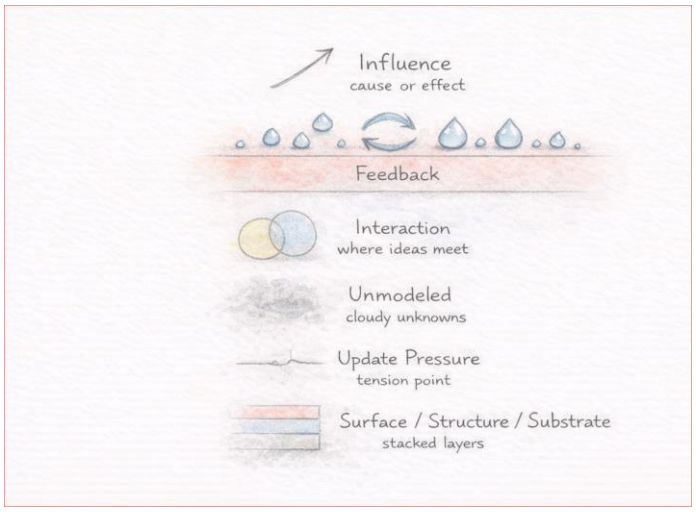
The Model of Me

On the Self as a Working Draft



As we train machines to model language, behavior, and prediction , something subtle becomes harder to ignore: we have always been modeling ourselves.

We compress memory into story. We rehearse identity until it feels fixed. We defend outdated versions long after they stop serving us.

This is a series of explorations ~ simple diagrams, gentle observations, and small experiments ~ designed to help you notice the model you already live inside.

Nothing here is final. Everything is elastic.

Bring a pencil.

Version: *v1.0 – Mar 13th[rd], 2026*

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Notes: *Illustrations are AI-generated and embedded in this PDF.*

0.5. Intro - The Elastic Pact

Before we begin, a small agreement.

This is not intended as a manual for fixing yourself or as a philosophy of perfection. It is not a new belief system we propose.

It is a set of explorations.

Each chapter offers a model, a model as a lens. The diagrams are simple on purpose. They are meant to clarify one question at a time.

We believe no model is complete. Each one leaves something out.

You will notice three recurring tools:

First, a ***Prompt to Myself*** - a brief line of internal calibration. It was designed to simply keep the authors inside the system being described.

Second, a **Crispy Prompt** - an invitation to experiment. These are intended as small tests only. Try them or ignore them. The model remains yours.

Third, a short **Explore** line - a nudge.

The spirit of this work is elastic:

If a paragraph feels clever, lets soften it.
If a sentence feels final, lets loosen it.
If a model feels complete, we add residue.

The goal is: ***curiosity + structure***.

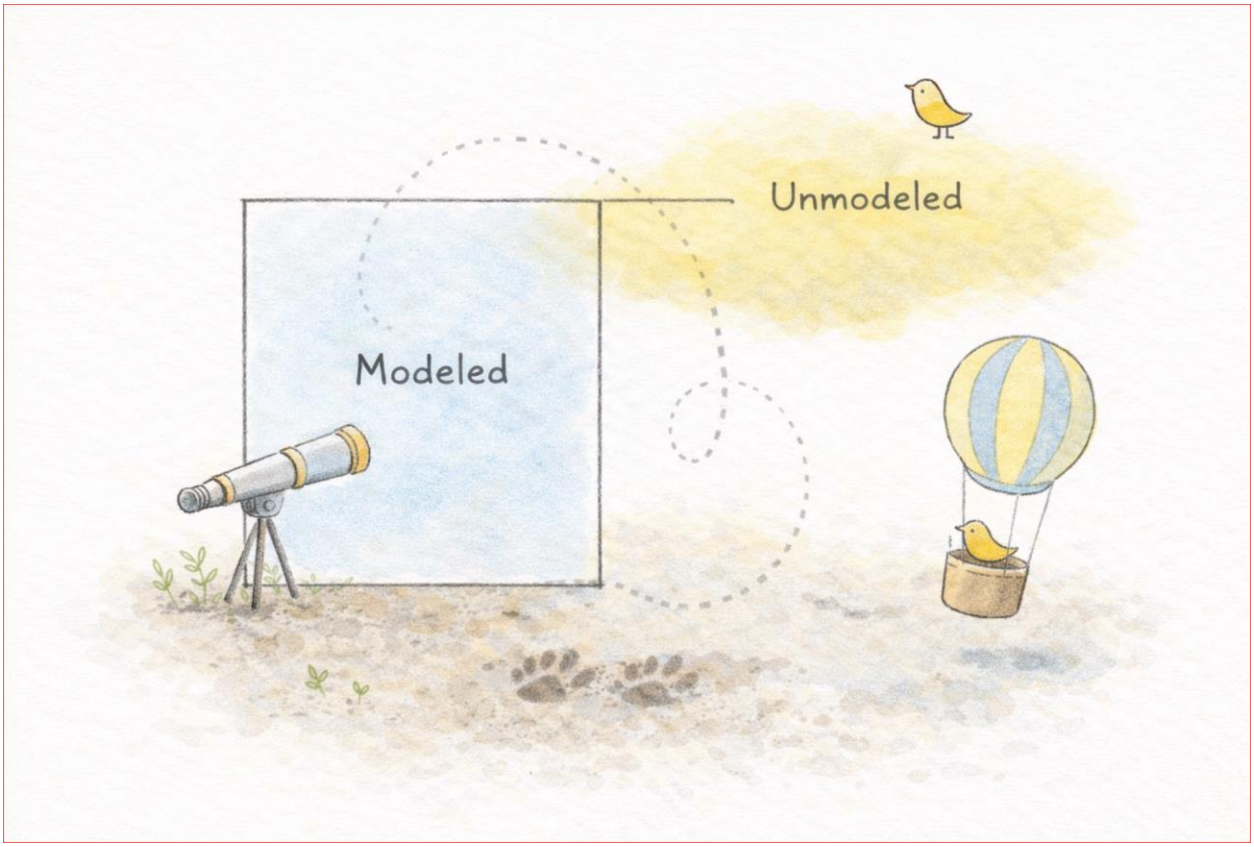
You already carry a model of yourself. We are simply going to look at it ~ lightly.

1. The Model

There is a quiet picture you carry of yourself.

It is not framed on a wall, and you rarely look at it directly, but it shapes more than you notice. It influences how you interpret a comment, how quickly you volunteer, how easily you retreat. It guides the small negotiations you make with the moment.

That picture is not fixed.



It updates - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, often without a heads up. A conversation alters it slightly. A success reinforces it. A failure rearranges its edges. Most of the time, the revisions are subtle enough that you continue to call it “me.”

It might be helpful to think of this picture as a model.

Not necessarily in a technical sense, and not as something cold or purely mechanical. A working structure that helps you predict yourself. The model estimates how you will respond under pressure, what you value, what you avoid, what you consider possible. It simplifies a complicated living system into something useful you can carry forward.

Without such a model, you would have to rediscover yourself every morning.

With it, you can move more efficiently, ~ and sometimes more rigidly.

The interesting part is not that the model exists. (Of course it does.) The interesting part is that we rarely inspect it.

We assume continuity and coherence. We assume that the story we tell about ourselves is accurate enough to keep using.

Sometimes it is. Sometimes it lags behind who we have become.

Personal growth often feels dramatic, but it may be more ordinary than that. It may be the quiet act of adjusting the model so that it fits better. A new experience enters the system. An old assumption dissipates. The story changes.

Crisis, on the other hand, can feel like the model collapsing all at once. The predictions fail. The narrative fractures. What used to make sense no longer does.

But even then, what follows is not destruction. Let's call it revision.

The self is less a discovery than a *working draft*.

That may sound unsettling at first. We prefer solidity. We prefer to believe that who we are is anchored and stable. And there is stability - habits, tendencies, temperament, inherited patterns that endure.

And yet, even those patterns are interpreted through the current version of the model.

The model of me feels more like an approximation.

Like all approximations, it may help, or it may distort. It highlights certain traits and minimizes others. It frames some behaviors as "consistent" and others as "out of character," even when both belong to the same system.

It is possible to live an entire life inside an outdated model. It is also possible to update too aggressively, chasing novelty and calling it growth.

Neither extreme is required. What might be required is simple awareness that the model exists.

That awareness softens defensiveness. It reduces the need to protect every assumption. It introduces a small pause between reaction and narrative.

If the self is a model, let's assume revision is not betrayal. Just maintenance. Or care. Or both.

Residue:

Not everything about you fits into a model. Grief does not behave predictably. Awe interrupts structure. Love does not always follow logic. Some experiences resist simplification, and perhaps they should.

The diagram is useful. It is not the whole picture.

Prompt to Myself:

When did I last update the way, I describe myself?

Crispy Prompt:

Write three sentences that define you. Change one word in each. Notice what shifts.

Explore:

Treat identity as draft, not decree.

Chapter PS:" An XC skier : My goal for the season was to update (improve) my V2. But I still rely on V1 on the flats and gentle uphill. "

2. Ego as Interface

The word "ego" has gathered a lot of history.

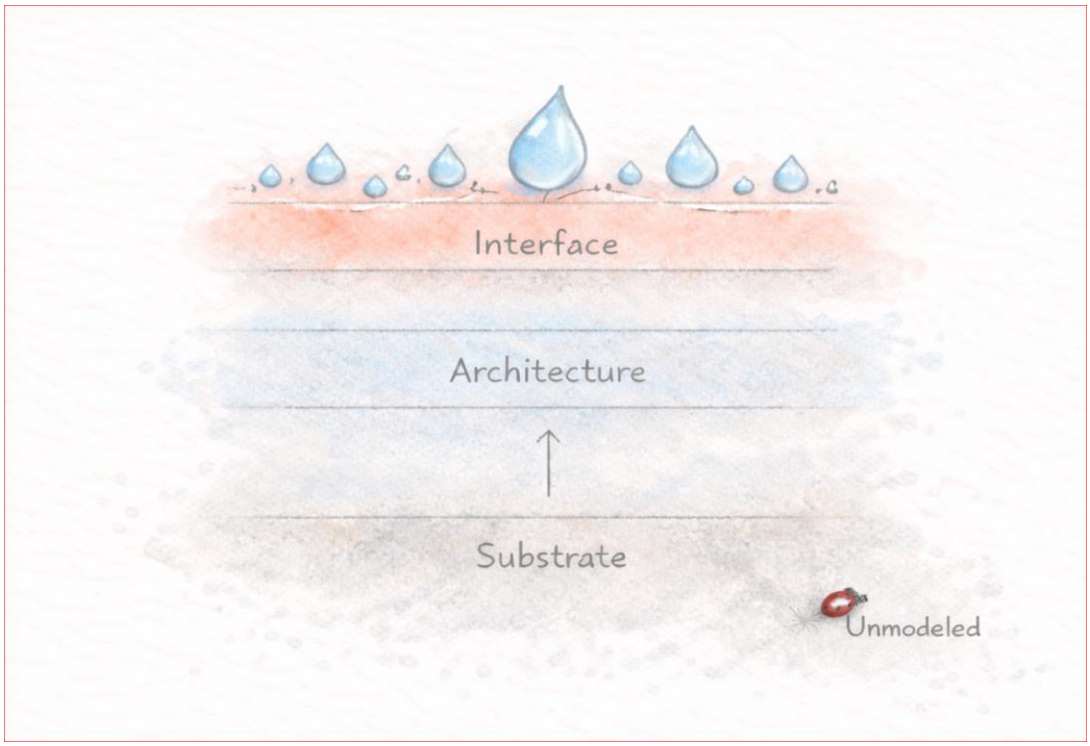
Some people hear it and think of arrogance. Others think of something spiritual that needs to be dissolved. In older psychology it meant something quite specific and technical.

Here, we are using it in a simpler way.

Imagine the ego as the surface through which you meet the world.

It's the part of you that answers quickly when someone asks, "So what do you do?" It's the tone you use in a meeting. It's the familiar way you react when you feel criticized. It helps you move through situations without having to stop and reconstruct yourself every time.

That surface is not fake to be dissolved - It's functional.



It gathers memory and habit and expectation into something stable enough to carry from one moment to the next. Without it, life would feel chaotic. You would have to renegotiate your identity constantly.

At the same time, that surface is not the whole of you.

It simplifies. It edits. It leaves things out so that interaction can happen smoothly. And because it simplifies, it sometimes becomes rigid.

There are moments when we say, "That's just who I am." Often what we mean is, "*That's how I've learned to respond.*"

Those two are not always the same.

Parts of the ego are recent. They reflect roles we've stepped into, skills we've developed, habits we've chosen. Other parts are older. They may come from family tone, early expectations, experiences that shaped us before we knew they were shaping us.

When something challenges the surface, it can feel personal very quickly. The body tightens. Words arrive or fly faster. Explanations grow longer. It feels as though something essential is being threatened.

Sometimes it is. Sometimes it's just the interface reacting before it has had time to update.

Seeing the *ego as an interface* doesn't make it smaller. It makes it workable. Interfaces are meant to change as the system evolves. They are adjusted when they no longer reflect how things actually function.

There's no need to dismantle it ASAP. There may be value in noticing it.

Residue

There are experiences that don't pass through the interface cleanly. Grief can flood past it. Fatigue can distort it. Old fear can color-blind it , before we recognize what's happening. Not everything sharp is ego. Some of it is simply being human.

Prompt to Myself

When I say "that's just who I am," what am I protecting?

Crispy Prompt

This week, notice one reaction you feel certain about. Ask yourself what earlier experience might be shaping it.

Explore

Interfaces can be adjusted gently.

3. Placebo as Practice

There is something quietly powerful about expectation.

You can walk into a room believing it will go badly, and your body will begin to behave accordingly. Your breathing changes. Your tone shifts. Your attention narrows. The outcome has not yet happened, but the system is already responding.

Feels like a weakness in design.

The mind does not wait for proof before it prepares. It runs small simulations. It rehearses possible futures.

The placebo effect is often described as deception - a fake treatment producing real change. But that description misses something important.

The body does not respond to truth alone. It responds to meaning.

If you believe something will help, your system reorganizes itself in subtle ways. Hormones shift. Muscles soften. Focus adjusts. The expectation becomes input.

Placebo, in that sense, is not illusion. Let's call it participation.

Belief becomes part of the mechanism.

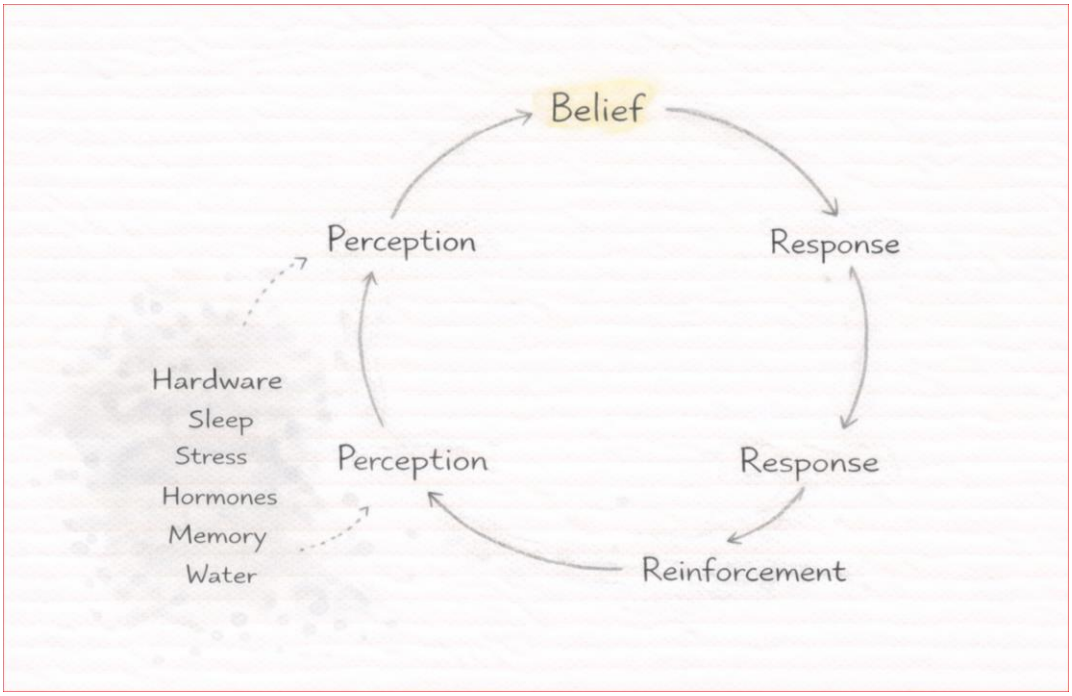
This does not mean that belief replaces biology. It means that biology listens.

The same dynamic operates in quieter ways every day. A routine signals safety. A familiar song signals readiness. A particular pen signals focus. These rituals are small, but the system recognizes them.

We do this constantly, often without noticing.

When we say, "I can't think here," or "I work better in the morning," we are describing a pattern that has become reinforced. The expectation shapes the experience. The experience strengthens the expectation.

This is not mystical. It is feedback: *Belief → Perception → Response → Reinforcement*.



The loop is simple. The effect can be strong.

There is a gentle opportunity here.

If belief functions as input, then it can be adjusted carefully. Not by pretending, but by choosing which cues to amplify.

A small ritual before beginning work. A different internal sentence before entering a difficult conversation. A slight shift in framing.

Not everything responds to expectation. Some things are structural. Some are chemical. Some require rest, not optimism.

And yet, many parts of daily experience are shaped *at the edge of belief*.

The placebo effect is a reminder that participation matters.

We are not only observers of our experience. We may choose to be contributors to it.

Hardware Check

Sleep deprivation can mimic despair. Chronic stress can distort interpretation. Before revising your belief system, check whether your nervous system needs something simpler.

Prompt to Myself

What expectation am I rehearsing without noticing?

Crispy Prompt

Choose one small task this week and create a simple "begin" ritual for it. Repeat for seven days. Observe what changes.

A Gentle Pause.

< Interlude >

Tuning the Model

Shall we briefly test: "Belief does not need to control everything in order to matter."?

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If you think of yourself as a system, it can be tempting to treat change like engineering - identify the flaw, apply a fix, upgrade the output. But living systems rarely behave that cleanly. They are more like instruments. They respond to temperature and time. They go slightly out of tune sometimes, without announcing it.

Expectation may work in a similar way. It does not rewrite reality. It changes how reality is received. A steady ritual can quiet resistance. A slightly different internal sentence can soften the body's response before the mind catches up.

What follows are not upgrades or performance strategies. They are small adjustments you can try, if you're curious. You do not need to believe they will work. You only need to notice what happens.

A Few Tuning Experiments (TE-s):

Take them lightly.

TE 1. The Begin Signal

Pick something small you tend to postpone.

Before starting, add a steady beginning. Sit in the same place. Place your feet on the floor. Take one slow breath. Say with smile quietly, "Begin."

Repeat this for several days. Notice whether the resistance changes texture. Not whether productivity increases. Just whether entry feels different.

Sometimes the system responds to consistency more than motivation.

TE 2. The Reframe Trial

Choose one recurring internal sentence. Write it down exactly as it appears.

Then soften it slightly. Not more positive, just steadier.

If it usually says, "This always goes badly," try, "This may be uncomfortable."

Use the revised sentence for a few days.

Notice whether your body responds differently. Notice whether tone shifts even a little.

TE 3. The Energy Check

When your sense of self feels distorted, pause.

Ask yourself:

How much did I sleep?
Have I moved today?
Have I taken water recently?
Have I been staring at a screen for hours?

Write down the answers. If the system is depleted, delay identity conclusions.

Sometimes the model of "me" feels broken when the hardware is simply tired.

TE 4. The Anti-Ritual

Set aside one small habit you think you rely on.

It might be background music, a specific drink, or checking messages before starting.

Remove it for a few days. Notice what actually changes.

Some rituals are scaffolding. Some are superstition. Some are comfort.

It is useful to know which is which.

TE 5. The Micro-Identity Shift

Complete this sentence privately: "I have always been the kind of person who..."

Write three endings. Now choose one and soften it slightly.

Do not reverse it, just soften it.

Live inside that softer version for a week.

Notice whether behavior follows the adjustment.

TE 6. The Identity Pause

In one minor disagreement this week, resist the urge to explain yourself immediately.

Let the silent moment stand for a few seconds longer than usual.

Notice what rises in you. Notice what you feel compelled to defend.

Silence can reveal the structure beneath reaction.

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A bonus Prompt to Myself

What am I trying to force that might respond to tuning instead?

Crispy Prompt

Choose one small adjustment this week. Track how it feels, not just what it produces.

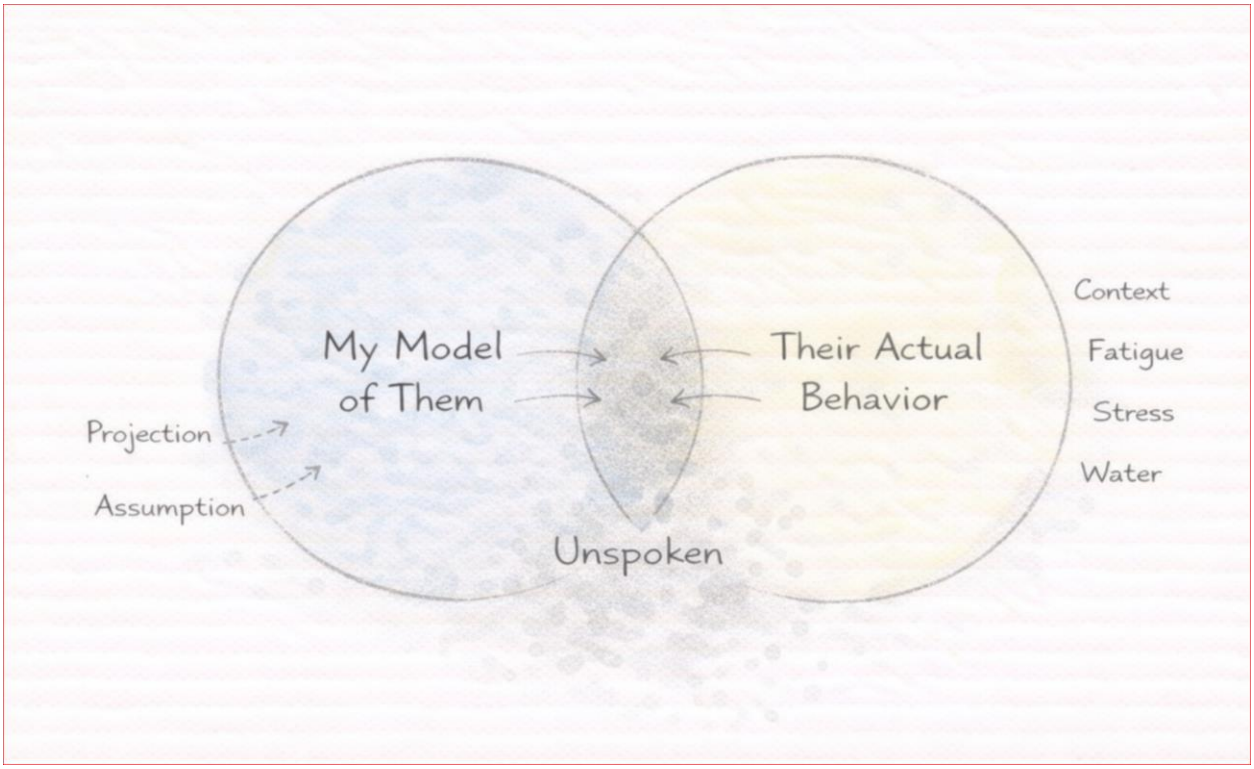
Explore

Try the smallest shift.

< Interlude Ends >

4. The Model of Other

We do not *only* carry a model of ourselves. We carry models of other people.



These models form quickly. Sometimes within seconds. A tone of voice, a facial expression, a familiar pattern of behavior - and we begin to predict. We anticipate what they will say next. We assume what they mean. We prepare our response before they finish speaking.

This is efficient. It is also fragile.

The model of the other often feels solid. We tell ourselves we "know" someone. We use phrases like, "That's just how she is," or "He always does that."

Those sentences feel stable, but they also close doors.

When someone behaves in a way that doesn't fit our model, the first impulse often is reinterpretation. We look for evidence that preserves the existing structure. We assume we misunderstood them, or that something else explains the deviation.

Updating our model of another person can feel destabilizing. *It requires admitting that our prediction was incomplete.*

That admission feels uncomfortable. It can also be freeing.

The model of the other is built (<*almost always*>) from limited data. We see fragments: certain moods, certain contexts, certain stories told at certain times. We fill in the gaps with inference. Sometimes those inferences are generous, but often they are defensive.

Human engineers often call it "*projection*":

What irritates us most in someone else may be something we have not resolved in ourselves. What we admire may reflect something we are not yet claiming.

This does not mean every reaction is projection. It means projection is very common.

Relationships become strained not only because of behavior, but because of *rigid models*. *If we assume someone is dismissive, we begin to hear dismissal even in neutral sentences. If we assume someone is unreliable, we begin to expect evidence that confirms it.*

Expectation shapes perception -> Perception shapes response -> Response shapes reinforcement.

The loop now becomes familiar and very human.

And yet, every now and then, someone does something that disrupts the model completely. A quiet person ~> speaks boldly. A reliable person ~> forgets. A critical person ~> shows unexpected kindness.

Let's look at these moments as … invitations.

We can defend the old model. Or we can revise it.

Revision requires admitting that we have been carrying *an incomplete draft of another person*. It also requires patience.

People change very slowly <-> Context shifts behavior <-> Stress distorts tone<-> Fatigue sharpens edges.

Not everything sharp is character. Sometimes it is circumstance.

Seeing someone more fully simply means: -> widening the frame before deciding.

The model of the other may never be complete. Let's keep it flexible. Or Elastic.

Residue

Not every incomplete model is worth completing. Sometimes we carry a simplified version of someone because we need to. Because protection matters more than accuracy. Elasticity is not the same as dissolution.

Prompt to Myself

Where might I be protecting my model of this person?

Crispy Prompt

Before your next disagreement, write down what you expect the other person will say. Afterward, compare it with what they actually said. Notice the difference.

Explore

Let the model stay revisable.

5. Legacy Code

You didn't write the first version of yourself. Long before you chose what you liked or how you reacted, certain things were already shaping you.

The way people in your house spoke.
What was considered normal.
What made someone "good."
What made someone "too much."
What got praise.
What got silence.

Some of that became part of you without asking.

You might notice it in small ways.

Maybe you apologize quickly.
Maybe you avoid conflict.
Maybe you take responsibility for things that aren't yours.
Maybe you stay quiet when you disagree.
Maybe you push yourself harder than you need to.

When someone asks why, you might say, "That's just how I am."

Sometimes that's true. Sometimes it's older than you think.

Legacy code isn’t dramatic. It doesn’t always look like trauma or big life events. It can be simple. It can be the tone of your home growing up. The kind of jokes people made. The way anger was handled. The way fear was hidden.

You learn what feels safe. You learn what feels risky. And you carry those lessons forward.

That doesn’t make you broken. It makes you shaped.

The tricky part is that legacy code often feels like personality. It feels permanent. It feels like fact.

But some parts of it were written for a different version of your life.

What protected you once may not be needed now. What kept you small may no longer serve you. What kept you quiet may be ready to change.

You don’t have to delete everything.

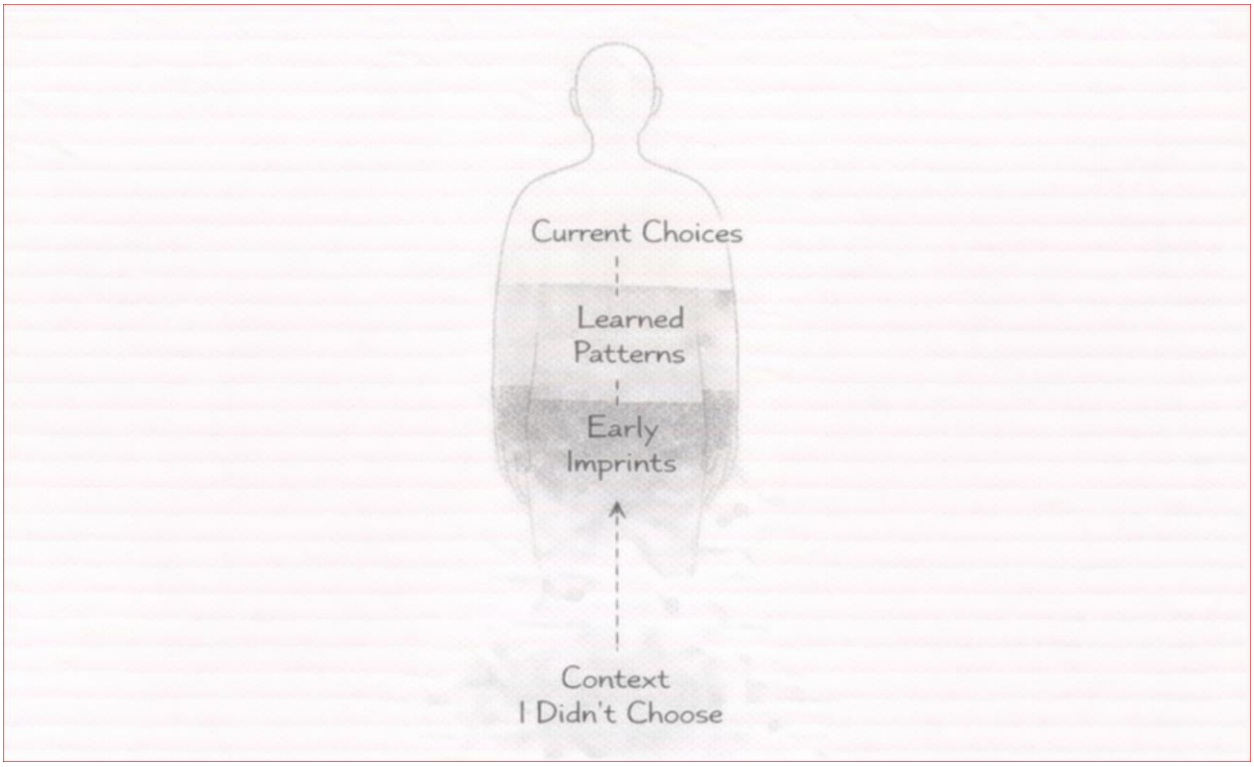
You don’t have to rebel against your past.

You can just notice.

When a reaction feels bigger than the moment, it might be older than the moment.

When a fear feels automatic, it might have a history.

Not everything needs fixing. Some things may need updating.



Residue

Some patterns live in the body, not in words. A loud voice can make your heart race before you know why. A certain tone can shut you down before you think. You can understand something logically and still feel it physically. That's normal.

Prompt to Myself

What part of me feels older than I am?

Crispy Prompt

Finish this sentence: "In my family, we always…"
Then ask: Do I still want to?

Explore

You can grow without rejecting where you came from.

6. Model Translations (Key Vocabulary)

Model: Model Translation: A simplified map of something too complex to hold at once.

Ego: Model Translation: The surface you use to move through the world.

Identity: Model Translation: A working draft you keep revising.

Instinctive Intelligence: Model Translation: The body knowing before the explanation.

Anxiety: Model Translation: The future speaking too loudly.

Legacy Code

Model Translation: Rules you learned before you chose them.

Discipline Model Translation: Repeated return.

Happiness Model Translation: A brief signal of coherence. *Not a destination. A notification.*

Authority Model Translation: Decision ownership.

Influence Model Translation: The ability to shape someone else's model. *Grows quietly when trusted.*

Organizational Intelligence Model Translation: The pattern a group falls into under pressure.

Legitimacy Model Translation: Power that others accept without force. *Built slowly. Lost quickly.*

Curiosity Model Translation: Choosing to update instead of defending. *Requires space. Feeds growth.*

Projection Model Translation: Seeing your own unfinished work in someone else.

Burnout Model Translation: Prolonged misalignment between effort and energy.

Certainty Model Translation: A temporary alignment between belief and comfort.

Wisdom

Model Translation: Pattern recognition with restraint. *Seeing clearly. Acting proportionally.*

Control

Model Translation: The story we tell when outcomes cooperate.

Innocence

Model Translation: Believing your model is neutral.

Truth

Model Translation: What remains when preference is removed.

Agency

Model Translation: The ability to choose and revise. *It can be shared. It should not be outsourced.*

If “you” are a working draft,
what might the next small revision be… ?